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DE RUEHKI #1439 2571436
ZNY CCCCC ZZH
P 141436Z SEP 06
FM AMEMBASSY KINSHASA
TO RUEHC/SECSTATE WASHDC PRIORITY 4778
INFO RUEHXR/RWANDA COLLECTIVE
RUCNSAD/SOUTHERN AFRICAN DEVELOPMENT COMMUNITY
RUEAIIA/CIA WASHDC
RHEFDIA/DIA WASHDC
RHMFISS/HQ USEUCOM VAIHINGEN GE
RUFOADA/JAC MOLESWORTH RAF MOLESWORTH UK

C O N F I D E N T I A L KINSHASA 001439

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E.O. 12958: DECL: 09/14/2016
TAGS: [PGOV](#) [PREL](#) [KDEM](#) [CG](#) [EUN](#) [UK](#) [SA](#)
SUBJECT: THREE DAYS IN KINSHASA: HIGH-LEVEL MEETINGS AND A
KABILA-BEMBA REUNION.

Classified By: PolCouns DBrown, reasons 1.4 b,d.

¶1. (C) Summary. Two days of high-level visitors to Kinshasa September 11 and 12 were followed September 13 by the long-awaited face-to-face meeting between President Joseph Kabila and Vice President Jean-Pierre Bemba, the two protagonists in the Congolese presidential elections and August 20-22 partisan violence. While details remain sketchy, the Kabila-Bemba optics were good, and the role of the international community was strengthened, given meetings South African President Mbeki, EU foreign affairs chief Solana and UK development minister Benn had with them separately beforehand. The UNGA next week in New York will provide an opportunity for the USG to reinforce this dialogue. End summary.

¶2. (U) The long-awaited meeting of President Kabila and Vice President Bemba took place September 13 following the visits of a number of high-level visitors to Kinshasa earlier in the week. Kabila and Bemba, whose forces shot it out in the streets of the capital August 20-22, met privately on the margins of a scheduled meeting at the Presidential Palace following weeks of posturing and negotiation. Spokesmen pronounced themselves pleased with the meeting. Congolese television showed the two chatting and smiling for the cameras.

¶3. (U) President Thabo Mbeki of South Africa, EU foreign affairs chief Javier Solana and UK international development minister Hilary Benn had all traveled to Kinshasa for meetings with both Kabila, Bemba, UN and elections officials earlier in the week. Mbeki arrived in the early hours of September 11 and departed that afternoon. Details of his meetings remain the subject of speculation, even by close aides of the candidates. Mbeki told the press he had come to listen, not to make proposals. Nevertheless, after his meeting with Bemba, he announced that Bemba had agreed to fully resume his functions in the government.

¶4. (C) We understand that Benn's message focused on several key points: reduce the military presence, respect media rules, maintain the October 29 second-round date, campaign on the issues. Benn held his meetings the same day as Mbeki, and also delivered signed messages from PM Blair. We understand from a readout of the Benn meetings that Kabila blamed Bemba for the August violence, (and vice versa) but Kabila was prepared to meet with Bemba, and that Bemba also responded positively.

¶5. (C) Solana met with both separately on September 12, as well as inspecting the 1000-odd European Union military force (EUFOR) in place in the capital. He told the press he had

not come to mediate, but correctly predicted that Kabila and Bemba would meet the following day. He was accompanied by the head of his Africa task force, Koen Vervaeke, who told USEU that Solana pushed both to adhere to the electoral code of conduct, urged them to meet, and take responsibility for ensuring peace. Solana also told them of his concern about the increase in arms in Kinshasa on both sides.

16. (C) Vervaeke characterized the visit as positive, but Solana's briefing to ambassadors of EU governments later appears to have been decidedly pro-Kabila. One participant told us the overall sense was that Solana could not countenance a Kabila loss, and that he viewed Bemba as a "dirty rebel".

17. (SBU) Comment: Many of our Congolese interlocutors had been calling for intervention by the international community to bring Kabila and Bemba together. While only a step in the much larger process, the quick succession of meetings at least appears to have the desired effect. End comment.
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